

St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church
Pedro Bay
Alaska ~~LAKE AND PENINSULA~~

HABS No. AK-87

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AK,
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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Washington D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
ST. NICHOLAS RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

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Location: Pedro Bay, Alaska.

Present Owner: Alaska Diocese, Orthodox Church in America.

Present Occupant: St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church.

Present Use: Church.

Significance: A number of historic Russian Orthodox churches survive in Alaska, built by Native congregations in traditional forms. The log church at Pedro Bay features a dramatic polygonal roof over its semi-octagonal sanctuary.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1943, according to present villagers.
2. Builder: Wankha Zackhar, a local resident, according to present villagers.
3. Original plans and construction: The church was built of logs, with a gable-roofed nave. The sanctuary is semi-octagonal. The church at Kenai was cited as a design source for this, but the sanctuary of the Kenai church is not as wide as the nave. Here, the sanctuary walls are a continuation of the nave's, before the angled end.
4. Alterations and additions: None known.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The log church has a tall, polygonal roof over the semi-octagonal sanctuary.
2. Condition of fabric: Deteriorating.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The church measures 15'-9" x 23'-2", with a semi-octagonal east end, and a 5'-11" x 4'-4" vestibule on the west end.
2. Foundations: Log sills.

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3. Walls: Hewn logs, squarenotched and nailed, covered with flattened fuel cans and tarpaper in spots. The gable is covered with wood shingles. The vestibule is covered with wood shingles on the south side, and vertical rounded planks on the north.
4. Structural system: Log. The vestibule is wood-framed.
5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The west wall of the vestibule is unenclosed.
 - b. Windows: Most of the windows have been broken out, but they were nine-light, fixed sash.
6. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: The gable roof is covered with wood shingles. Over the sanctuary, the roof is slightly lower, becoming polygonal over the polygonal end.
 - b. Cornice, eaves: exposed rafter ends at the eaves.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The nave is one open space, separated from the sanctuary by the iconostas.
2. Stairways: There is a small, one-step amvon.
3. Flooring: The flooring is tongue-and-groove, covered in spots by linoleum. The sanctuary floor is linoleum.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: The walls are covered with cheesecloth over the logs. The ceiling is wallpapered.
5. Doorways: The door between the vestibule and the nave is single, with five horizontal panels.
6. Decorative features: The icons have been removed from the iconostas. The bell is sitting on the floor of the nave.

D. Site:

Set on a hill above the village, the church faces west, with the altar on the east end, as was traditional among Russian Orthodox Churches.

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PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Walter and Annie Johnson, Gus and Xenia Jensen, and Alex Kolyaha, all residents of Pedro Bay, interviewed by Father Michael and Hank Anelon May 28, 1990.

PART IV. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Documentation of St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER), a division of the National Park Service, the state of Alaska, and the Icon Preservation Task Force. The project was executed under the general direction of Robert J. Kapsch, chief of HABS/HAER, and Boyd Evison, Alaska Regional Director, National Park Service. Recording was carried out during summer 1990 by Steven M. Peterson, project director; Jet Lowe, photographer; and Alison K. Hoagland, historian, who prepared this report.

ADDENDUM TO
ST. NICHOLAS RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
Pedro Bay
Dillingham
Alaska

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